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Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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IOWA PHEASANT PLATE 5th BEST IN NORTH AMERICA

DES MOINES - Iowa's new specialty license plate featuring a pheasant finished in fifth place in the 2005 Best License Plate competition, according to the Automobile License Plate Collectors Association (ALPCA). The annual contest covers the U.S. and Canada.

Designed by Cedar Rapids artist Greg Bordignon, the plate was one of two new natural resource money-raising plates, prompted by the Iowa DNR, that became available last fall. It features a rooster pheasant springing into flight with a ghosted farmscape background. The other new plate is an eagle taking flight over a ghosted image of the Mississippi River.

Kansas captured first place with its new buffalo plate, followed by Tennessee's bald eagle. Competition was close among the top five, according to the ALPCA spokesman.

The new Iowa plates joined the 10-year old goldfinch/wild rose plate in generating revenue for Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program. REAP provides funding for city, county and state parks and conservation areas, soil and water quality, historical preservation and conservation education. A year ago, the price of the plates was increased to \$45 to purchase and \$25 for annual renewal so that they could also begin supporting the wildlife diversity program.

For more information, contact Ross Harrison at 515-281-5973

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DNR COMPLETES ACQUISITION OF 140 ACRES ALONG UPPER IOWA RIVER

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has just acquired two separate pieces of land totaling 140 acres in Winneshiek County from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF). The land borders the Upper Iowa River and will be permanently protected as a natural scenic area for recreation and wildlife.

The INHF purchased the 100-acre property from David and Carol Getz in 2003. The purchase was made possible by a public private Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant from the Iowa DNR for \$185,000. The 40-acre property was donated to the INHF in 1990, and was included in this transfer to the DNR.

The property consists of bottomland cropland and forested land and is situated directly across the Upper Iowa River from the Chimney Rock Park and adjacent to the Upper Iowa Wildlife Area. The cropland would be converted to prairie to protect the view of the chimney rocks.

"This acquisition fits perfectly with the department's goals of acquiring high priority areas adjacent to existing state lands," said Travis Baker, with the DNR's land acquisition bureau.

The land was appraised at \$367,000. The DNR purchased the land for \$275,250.

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[electronic photos available]

NORTH IOWA PHEASANTS CHAPTER WANTS MORE YOUTHS IN OUTDOORS

First Time Field Day Scores Big Hit

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

KANAWHA---For most of us, this year's pheasant season ended back in January. But for an eager group youngsters who assembled for a special field day last Saturday, there was one last opportunity to match wits with the elusive ring-neck.

Sponsored by the Wright County Four Seasons Chapter of Pheasants Forever, the youth event was held at the Pheasant Haven shooting preserve. According to field day organizers, the outing was the first of its kind to be held in Northern Iowa.

"What we were looking for was a way to get more kids involved in the outdoors, and holding a youth field day seemed like a good way to accomplish that," said Dennis Trausch, Vice President of Four Seasons Pheasants Forever. "We started the morning with trap shooting, and participants also got a chance to shoot rifles or BB guns. There was an archery station which was also pretty popular.

"When we got to the pheasant hunt, Marv Stupka [owner of Pheasant Haven] provided the dogs and guides. All the kids received a DNR safety talk and we required one adult to accompany each youth. We limited each group to just three or four hunters," said Trausch.

Twelve-year-old, Chase Berneman was among the groups of hunters who took to field. The weather was blustery and the birds nervous. After watching a number of pheasants erupt from well beyond shotgun range, Berneman finally got his chance as one of Stupka's expertly trained Labrador retrievers produced a perfect flush on a tight sitting rooster.

Berneman quickly shouldered his shotgun and swung hard to catch the fleeing bird. The rooster folded at the shotgun's report. There were audible kudos as the retriever delivered the pheasant.

"I shot trap this morning and broke about half of them," recalled Berneman as his team broke for lunch. "I

saw pheasants, but only had a shot at one rooster and I got him. I had a lot of fun today. If they have this again next year, I'll be back."

"This was a very good event," commented Brad Berneman [Chase's father] after accompanying his son through the morning's activities. "There has been a very good group of mentors here today and it's really great to see the kids turn out to experience this."

"I think the kids all had a lot of fun and everyone seems very pleased with how things turned out. I'm pretty sure we'll want to do this again next year," said Trausch.

The Four Seasons Chapter of Pheasants Forever will hold its annual fund raising banquet on March 15 at the Belmond Country Club. There are currently more than 560 PF chapters nationwide. The Four Seasons group consistently ranks in the top 25 for dollars spent on habitat.

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[electronic photo available]
VENTURA HUNTER BAGS RARE GOOSE
HUNT IS AIDED BY UNUSUAL EVENTS
By Lowell Washburn
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

VENTURA--- Acclaimed naturalist Aldo Lepold once stated that "to band a bird is to hold a ticket in a great lottery."

Last Saturday, Ventura's Kevin Olson won the bird band lottery.

Olson is the owner of Big Marsh Taxidermy, located near the south edge of Ventura Marsh. While working in his studio last weekend, Olson was interrupted by the shrill sound of migrating snow geese. Not just your average number of birds, mind you, but so many geese that the flock's combined honking could only be described as a "loud roar." Rushing outside, Olson observed waves of geese flying in all directions. As he watched, several hundred of the noisy birds began landing in an adjacent cornfield.

With the [snow goose] season currently open, the sight was irresistible. It was time to go hunting.

"I didn't know how long those geese would be feeding, but I thought it would be worth a try," said Olson. "I ended up walking to the edge of some tall grass near where the geese had been landing. I just sat there and hoped some would fly my way."

The hunt was quickly aided by a strange turn of events when an adult bald eagle appeared from the east. The giant raptor soared across the marsh to where several hundred geese were still assembled on the ice. Eagles routinely eat lesser snow geese, and the waterfowl lost no time becoming airborne. As the huge flock divided, a group of around 400 geese headed straight toward Olson's position.

"The geese had been pouring into that cornfield, and now this flock looked as if it might head right to me," said Olson. "When they came over the top, I picked out one goose and was amazed to see that it had a yellow collar on its neck. I was already excited, and seeing the collar just added to it. I thought to myself -- You just can't miss this one."

Olson took careful aim, fired, and much to his horror, he did miss. Maintaining his cool, he stayed with the bird and followed through. The goose folded on the second shot.

"The hunt was short, but definitely exciting," grinned Olson. "For me, this is a real trophy. I've always wanted to bag a collared snow goose and now I have."
But the drama isn't over yet. Olson has notified officials with the United States Migratory Bird Banding

Laboratory in Laurel, Md., and is now anxiously waiting to learn when and where his trophy snow goose was banded.

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RESCUE IOWA'S PRAIRIES WITH THE LEGACY OF ALDO LEOPOLD

DES MOINES - Iowa volunteers are invited to “rescue” prairies throughout the state to commemorate the life of Aldo Leopold, an Iowa native and national conservation figure.

Just in time for the 7th Annual Iowa Spring Prairie Rescue, Iowa legislation is moving to designate April as Aldo Leopold Month. Born in Burlington in 1887, Leopold is known nationally as a naturalist, ecologist and educator. He is best remembered for his book A Sand County Almanac and for developing the concept of a “land ethic,” which asks people to recognize their place in the environmental community and take responsibility for protecting it.

The annual Prairie Rescue puts Leopold’s teachings into practice. Volunteers of all ages will help “rescue” prairies at 20 sites throughout Iowa. Tasks vary by site and range from cutting out invasive brush to hand-planting.

Not only is citizen involvement beneficial to the community, it is crucial for the land upon which the people live. Looking back more than 150 years, prairies covered 80 percent of the land in Iowa, which is about 28 million acres. Today only 0.1 percent, or approximately 30,000 acres, of native Iowa prairies remain. In order to save what is left, humans must now manage these prairies by removing invasive species and performing other jobs once handled naturally by prairie wild fires and grazing bison or elk.

In the words of Leopold himself, "The first precaution of intelligent tinkering is to keep all the parts." The Prairie Rescue gives Iowans an opportunity to help save the remaining pieces of our prairies.

Kids and adults, individuals and groups can get involved at any of 20 Prairie Rescue sites across the state. Each site is sponsored by public and private conservation groups, such as the Iowa Prairie Network, Loess Hills Preservation Society, several Iowa County Conservation Boards, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

For a complete listing of Iowa Spring Prairie Rescue sites, visit the Prairie Rescue website at www.inhf.org/rescue2006.htm. Questions may be directed to Sarah West of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources at (515) 281-6271 or sarah.west@dnr.state.ia.us. For further assistance contact Cathy Engstrom of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation at (515) 288-1846 or cengstrom@inhf.org.

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TIME TO ORDER TREES AND SHRUBS

AMES - Landowners considering planting some wildlife habitat or preventing soil erosion should act now to order conservation trees and shrubs from the Iowa State Forest Nursery.

“We have excellent supplies of native oaks such as red, white, bur and swamp white along with good quantities of walnut, silver maple and many other species for this spring’s planting season,” said John Walkowiak, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) forestry bureau.

The State Forest Nursery, in Ames, supplies at the costs of production, conservation bareroot seedlings of more than 45 different native tree and shrub species for Iowa landowners to purchase and plant for conservation purposes such as reforestation, soil erosion control, water quality protection and wildlife habitat.

State Forest Nursery conservation trees and shrubs are for sale from \$25 per 100 plants for evergreen species such as pine and spruce to \$37 to \$45 per 100 plants for hardwood trees and shrubs such as oak and chokecherry. The minimum order is 500 plants.

"If you are looking at just starting out in conservation planting you may want to consider planting a wildlife packet of 200 trees and shrubs. The State Forest Nursery has designed special wildlife packets in cooperation with the National Wild Turkey Federation, Pheasants Forever and the DNR's wildlife bureau that includes such species as bur oak, dogwood, pine, Redoiser dogwood, highbush cranberry, wild plum, red cedar, or and others," Walkowiak said. These wildlife packets sell for \$90.

New this year is a "Create-Your-Own" packet that allows the individual to select up to four different tree or shrub species for \$90. Each species comes in packages of 50.

"For those with a larger backyard, we have a 20 tree and shrub songbird packet of oak, pine, plum, chokecherry, dogwood and serviceberry that was designed in cooperation with Iowa Audubon that sells for \$20," he said.

These plants are available for home delivery at a cost of \$5 per 100 plants. For more information or to order conservation trees and shrubs from the State Forest Nursery call 1-800-865-2477 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or on line at www.iowatreeplanting.com. The State Forest Nursery accepts personal checks, VISA or Master Card. Trees and shrubs will be available for shipping from early April until May 31.

For more information, contact Walkowiak at 515-242-5966.

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